My First Trip To Villa Nueva

Lil' Ras'h'l

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My First Trip to Villa Nueva

By GUILLERMO DOBLACHE.

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THE GUILLERMO DOBLACHE

Natural { Unsweetened / Unfortified } Sherries.

BOTTLED IN SPAIN.

SHERRY WINE takes its name from the Andalucian town of Jerez, the spelling of which in Shakespeare's time was *Xeres*, pronounced by the English people settled there, "Sherris."

"Sherris Sack" meant *Xeres Seco* (the *dry* wine of Jerez); dryness, as applied to wine, meaning simply freedom from sweetness. From those days up to A.D. 1703, when the Methuen treaty was made between England and Portugal, sherry continued to be consumed in its natural (i.e., dry, *seco*) state by English-speaking peoples, who for their red wines preferred Bordeaux, Burgundy, and other natural wines of France.

The Methuen treaty was designed, by placing a lower duty on the wines of Portugal than on those of France, to compel our forefathers to drink the former; which they accordingly, after a great deal of grumbling (see Pope and other poets), proceeded to do. Now the Portuguese wine, to which they took thus reluctantly, was the *vino tinto* of the Upper Douro shipped from Oporto, the "Port Wine" of commerce, which was (and is) a strong, sweet *liqueur* wine, produced by adding to the *must*, during fermentation, a very large percentage of high-proof brandy.

And so, as soon as a generation had arisen which had given up claret and Burgundy, and got used to this red *liqueur* wine of Oporto, the shipper of sherry (*Sherris Sack*) began to be told that his white wine was "too thin," and was asked if he could not ship something like, in richness and strength, to the Port Wine which the Englishman, both insular and continental, had come to love.

Nothing was easier! Sweet wine (notably that from the Pedro Jimenez grape nearly reduced to a raisin in the sun) was already made in the sherry district, and the shipper proceeded to make more of it, and to add a percentage of it to his Sherris Sack, with a suitable dose of wine brandy, in order to "marry" them; or, in other words, to keep the sweet from setting up secondary fermentation in the dry wine.

And this system has come down to the present day, a taste still prevailing for sweetness and strength in wine, and the "Sherry" of commerce being unquestionably the best white *liqueur* wine in the world.

But then it *is* a *liqueur* wine, and as such is naturally rejected *as a dinner wine* equally by the connoisseur and by the Andalucian shipper of it, who, if he entertains at all, will give you a *vino fino* at dinner and a *vino fino* "AMONTILLADO" afterwards, but never a sweetened wine, except to take the place of Curaçao or Maraschino.

The GUILLERMO DOBLACHE Sherries consist entirely of these *vinos finos* and *amontillados*, in their natural state, as used by such of the educated people in Andalucia as can afford to drink them; and they are therefore offered with confidence to the people of the United States.

MY FIRST TRIP TO VILLA NUEVA.

It was on a Thursday in Lent, in the early part of the period during which my Uncle Samuel was looking on while his boys straightened out their little misunderstanding, that I went on the trip in question, from that loveliest spot of the Bay of Cadiz, Puerto de Santa Maria, to Villa Nueva de —— something; but I forget its full title. Now I must tell you that in the first half of the sixties, when sherry was booming, and Gladstone's shilling duty act, and H. G. M.'s substitution of Scotch whisky (cold, without) for that noble wine, had not yet begun to play old gooseberry with its trade, we boys in Puerto and the much-baked Jerez were getting frightfully hard up for raw material wherewith to replenish our lower and lower-middle soleras. I had one of these, the foundation of which had been an *olorosito* of Chiclana, which was especially useful in the "*combinación*" of Nos. 2, 3 and 4 on my list; and the wicked Chiclanero who owned the rearing wine from which I had been used to replenish it, had been so ill-advised that spring as to sell what it would yield at the moment to a would-be-all-devouring Jerezano. It is true that the latter had been willing to give more than I had been, but it was an outrage all the same!

When my friend Adolfo T—— (the son of a French father by an English mother, settled in Puerto), who had always been the broker of this annual transaction, came to tell me of what had happened, I must have pulled a long face, for he rounded on me at once with "Well, it was your own fault. I told you everything was going up, and you ought to have sprung more the other day when I told you also that Don Gumersindo wouldn't part at anything like the old figure." "Oh, yes, but it's no use crying over robbed wine, and I *must* refresh and rest that G. M. solera of mine. What can you do for me?" "Nothing," snapped he; "you'd better use up your old solera, and trust to Providence to replace it, as you're so—stingy. I can't help you. I know every *criadera* of the kind within thirty miles of where we sit, and there isn't one of them disposable that will suit you." And Adolfo, who was naturally annoyed at having lost his commission, and,

besides, was very full of business, took himself off.

While I was rolling a rueful cigarette after his exit, there occurred to me the remark of an eccentric English friend of mine, who had come out to spend the winter in Puerto because he was threatened with pleurisy, and had remained on because he had a passion for hunting beetles and going to hear the organ in Seville cathedral. Some days before, when it was still uncertain whether Don Gumersindo would accept my offer, this benighted old entomologist had come to the bodega to replenish his demijohn of strong wine-brandy wherein to plunge his captured bugs, and happening to taste the G. M. solera, which I was examining at the time, had said: "Why that reminds me of what that old skinflint, Don Miguel Dolores up there in Seville, calls his old wine. He runs a *tienda* in a queer old house of the sixteenth century, where you can get a single drink, but he says he has a solera of eighty butts of it out at Villa Nueva, and that the brokers from Puerto and Jerez are all after him to sell what he can spare of it, but he will give no one a sample nor deal with any but principals."

I had thought but little at the time of what the old crank said, but it occurred to me now, and acting on what I had already found to be one of the best maxims in business—"never throw away a chance"—I put myself into that day's train for Seville and found only one passenger in the compartment into which I got. He was evidently an Englishman, for, apart from the ineffable coolness of the tight-little-islander (sometimes mistaken for arrogance by misguided foreigners), he was smoking a cuttie, which is an offense and stumbling-block in the *tierra de Maria Santisima*, where the men and women compound for the *puros* and *papelillos* they have a mind to by damning the pipes they're not inclined to.

As the train began to roll over the nine miles between Puerto and Jerez, I took a good look at his face, and presently back came the dear old Harrow days of ten years agone, and before we had well passed the *Delicias*, I had con-

cluded that it was Tommy Dodd or the devil.

The Hon. Thomas Dodd, sixth son of Lord Noddyvale, came to "Simmy's" the quarter before I left Harrow and entered the lower fourth form. Now, if he had been the son of that "uncommon lord," a marquis, he would have been Lord Thomas Dodd at call-over, and perhaps he could have stood that. But as he was the son of only a poor little viscount, he was nothing more than the Hon. Thomas Dodd, and so, when the master on duty was calling out the names, and the plain Brown, Jones and Robinson before him had answered to theirs, and *Mr.* Dodd was called upon to answer to his, Tommy found it very difficult, amid the titters of the other little fourth form boys, to do so. And it grew so irksome to him that at the end of the quarter he framed and presented a humble petition to the head master, Dr. Vaughan, to have the "Mister" dropped from his name at call-over, very much to that dignitary's amusement, but without any effect on Tommy's call-over title. He was soon the most popular boy at Simmy's, and perhaps in the whole school. He never made much of the "humane letters," but as he was active as a cat in the primitive football of that day, and became the best bat they had had in the eleven for many a year, the gentle churchmen who ruled over us made good his classical and mathematical deficiencies, and I believe that he was actually in the Upper Fifth when I had last seen him, leaning on his bat after an innings of eighty, in the Eton and Harrow match, at Lords', early in the fifties.

Then Spain took me and the cavalry him, and we lost sight of each other. But there soon came a day when all the English-reading world knew of Tommy. It was when the accounts came of that charge of which, blunder as it was and due to the petty squabbles of two too-nearly-related noble lords, Englishmen are more proud than of any well-planned successful feat of arms. For it was told how Tommy rode with the rest of the boys up to those Russian guns, and came back again scatheless, and how he was standing by his panting horse

patting his neck when a ball came and carried away one of his legs below the knee, and he sat down to bind it up, exclaiming, "Stump'd, by Jove!" and only adding as he made a tourniquet with his handkerchief, "Didn't learn to whip my own bat-handle for nothing." He was a Lieutenant-Colonel at twenty-five and the lion of a London season. Then he sold out, and all I had heard of him since was that with a cork leg, which no one could tell from the living article, he had become a great slayer of big, tearing, or goring, or hugging beasts, in Africa, India, America, and any other country where those unfittest animals survived.

As all this was rushing through my head my companion took his cuttie out of his mouth and began to hum "D'ye ken John Peel," for the singing of which Tommy had been famous of nights, when the old butler had taken our boots away; and then I knew it was he, and piped out "*Mister* Dodd," in the call-over voice of the old Fourth-Form master. And Tommy didn't turn a hair, nor call me by my name, H——, as I had expected, but before biting his pipe again, said, quietly:

"I knew you directly you got in. And what's more, I know your nickname, and how you got it, Señor Don Guillermo Doblache. And what's more, I'm a brother chip. *Now*, what d'you say, old man?"

"I say you're the very devil, and are probably lying. Why, the last I heard of you was that you had tamed a family of grizzlies and were setting up house with them in a primeval cave in the Rockies. Hold on, though. It never occurred to me all these years that you had anything to do with Dodd-Jason & Co. Have you?"

"Well, rather, seeing that I am now one of the Co. of that illustrious firm; 'little Co.' my family profanely call me, but that's neither here nor there."

"But how on earth?—well, of course, I know that the wine trade is looked on as a refuge for the destitute younger sons of the people with handles to their names; but that generally means going the round of swell houses under false pretenses, making sales as a great favor,

taking a handsome commission on the same, and overdrawing the commission account. That would scarcely suit you, I reckon."

"I should say not. Oh no, I'm regularly in for it. You know old Jason?" I nodded. "Well, he was christened Dodd because my grandfather stood godfather to him, and when he grew up he adopted a hyphen and came out as Dodd-Jason. Hence the name of the firm. And to make a long story short, I got awfully tired of doing nothing but shoot big game, and I've been his partner for the last six months in London, learning the business there, and now I've come out for a turn here, and early next summer I am to marry his only daughter."

"My dear fellow, I wish you every joy. The old man has a capital name in the trade, and last time I was in London I heard your future spoken of as an angel. You ought to be much happier than you deserve."

"Oh yes, I think I am. And I intend to do the thing thoroughly, according to my lights, now I am once in for it. You shall see whether I am in earnest or not. Why, just before I sailed I went and made the acquaintance of your old partner, Dr. G——, and he took me down into your Leadenhall street cellar, and made me taste your Manzanilla. I told him at the first taste that he had given me camomile tea by mistake, and the old boy was simply delighted at my having recognized the fine old bitter for which the wine is named, and he insisted on my trying again with an olive, and it ended in our finishing the bottle together and in my becoming as great an enthusiast about Manzanilla—'*pura y legitima*' mind you—as the doctor himself. But, hullo! Here we are running up the grade to Jerez. We shall be there presently. I've got to go to our *bodega* and improve my acquaintance with old Gandarilla, our *capataz*, who didn't take to me much the other day. I had intended looking you up at Puerto in a day or two, and giving you a surprise, but I've done that, I think. And now I must say by-by for the present."

"No, indeed, you musn't. You can't pretend that you're wanted at the cellar. You've got your traps here, I see. You say you're a con-

vert to Manzanilla. I'm going to *the* place where it can be drunk in perfection. Come on with me to Seville."

And I jumped out as we rolled into the Jerez station, explained to Gandarilla, who was there to meet Don Tomás, that the latter had important business in Seville now, but would be back in a day or two, got the necessary ticket, and found Tommy in his old seat, lighting another pipe with a quiet smile, quite willing to study that part of the wine trade which I had hastily proposed to him. And a fine crack we had on our way up to the home of the bull-fight and the mantilla.

I tried to get Tommy to smoke a *breba*. But, not a bit of it! Nothing could divert him from his beloved cuttie. Then he told me how he had been staying in Cadiz, since he landed, with the Spanish partner of their firm, Don Bartolomeo Olozagoitia, over whose ungodly name (as he called it) he made a great fuss, and how on his first trip to Jerez, where he had stayed one night, he had shocked poor Gandarilla, the *capataz*, almost to death by insisting on having a cold bath in one of the cooperage tubs; and generally how he had been amusing and shocking the natives, as, indeed, is done by all Britons on their first trip to Andalucia, however much they may have globe-trotted in other parts.

Then he went on to tell me more of his afternoon with my partner, the old doctor, who, when his heart was warmed with his half bottle of Manzanilla, had been mean enough to tell how I had been convinced against my will that his insisting on bottling in Spain that wine, and the natural sherries, was not a mere fad of his, as I had at first maintained. The fact was that the dear old boy, being of the peppery kind, had quarrelled with all the men in Puerto who in those days were equal to this *faena*, and I had consequently had to turn up my shirt-sleeves and undertake it myself, till I could train up some unskilled hands to the work. So I had hated the job, and two years before, when I was bottling a large parcel of our "Picarillo," an eight-year-old *vino fino*, I had, without telling him, shipped with the cases a butt of the wine in the wood, and had had this bottled in

the London cellar. Then, on my last trip to London, I had told the old man of what I had done, and how I would now convince him that there was no difference to be tasted between the two. "All right, bring 'em up," he had said, and I, innocent that I was, went down and fetched up a bottle from the bin, and one from a case of the Picarillo, bottled in Spain, fully expecting to confuse the old enthusiast. 'Stead of which I had had to "take it all back," and Tommy had been told the whole story, besides that of how the Cambridge boys who had come out to stay with me in Puerto had given in playful humor that ugly name * to an innocent *vino fino*, because they had insisted that they could drink it like bitter beer, and had found they couldn't—with impunity.

And then we fell to talking of old Harrow days, to which there was no end, and we had passed that oily village, Dos Hermanas, and were rolling into Seville before we had seemed to ourselves to begin at them.

There, on the platform at Seville, stood the very man I wanted, El Desdichado,† so called because he was the merriest little man of all the *quadrilla* of bull fighters living in the village of that guild just outside the city. He was a favorite with all the young swells who delighted in bull fights and Manzanilla, and readily undertook to assemble some of them in half an hour or so at the little *tienda*, off the Calle Sierpes, where the best of that nectar was dispensed, in order to initiate our new convert. Thither Tommy and I adjourned after having deposited his traps at the big hotel on the plaza, where he must needs put up in spite of my protests. Tommy had been "mugging up" Spanish, under a good Castilian master, before he left England, and not having a grain of shyness to his composition, was quite equal, especially when calm emphasis of expression was required, to talking with the half-dozen of the boys and three or four bull fighters besides El Desdichado, whom we found assembled. On such occasions Manzanilla is ordered by the "*polka*" of 100 dear little *cañitas* filled to the

Picarillo: literally little rogue.
†The unhappy.

brim, and one of these *polkas* was already on its tray on the counter as we entered.

This and some others went the way of all *polkas* before I had to leave Tommy (quite able, I need scarcely say, to take care of himself) and slip away to interview Don Miguel Dolores at that other little *tienda* in the "queer old sixteenth century house," of which my friend of the beetles had told me.

When I say little, I ought to add that though this part of Don Miguel's business was shoved away in a modest corner of the ground floor of a huge almost-palace which the old *sicatero* had bought of some spendthrift nobleman; its plain mean counter was backed by a wine store which ran through the whole of the rest of the floor except the part of it which was occupied by the horses which were Don Miguel's one vanity in life.

I began by tasting the old wine at the bar, and finding that it was very much as my English friend had described it, but doubting very much whether Don Miguel had more of it than a few butts, I got myself and my firm introduced to him in his den on the *entresuelo* of the old palace, and proposed that he should give me an order on his *Capataz* at Villa Nueva to show me the solera, and I would ride out and go through it the next day.

But, "no Señor," nothing of the kind! Now he had got a principal to deal with, Don Miguel knew how to treat him, and nothing would serve but he must drive him out early next morning in his coach and four, and himself do the honors of his bodega, or, I should say, bodegas, at Villa Nueva. Which, accordingly, verified itself.

I took an early breakfast at the Fonda de Europa, where I always stayed when I was in Seville, and was on time at the *tienda*, and we were out and over Triana bridge and past Christopher Columbus's house at Castilleja de la cuesta before the "unemployed" inhabitants had finished rubbing their eyes in the morning. The team was first rate, and not without a keen eye to business had each of the four *potros* a good share of Arab blood; for Don Miguel, besides lending money to the "blue blood" of Seville, sold it

many a high stepper trained on that road between Seville and Villa Nueva. I ought to say that at the point where the road forked, to the right in the direction of Italica (the Roman Seville, with its amphitheatre, and its small children yelling at you with Roman coins made at Birmingham in their dirty little fists), and to the left in that of Villa Nueva, we passed a huge "Last Chance" grocery store and *tienda*, with muleteers stretching themselves in its yard before loading up their beasts for their first day's trudge towards the Sierra; but Don Miguel did not let on that the whole place belonged to him, and only waved his hand to the manager as we bowled along without stopping.

Well, we went to work at once on arrival at the bodega, which was one of several owned and run by the old boy, who lent money to all the poor *viñateros* the country round, bought their crops if it suited him to do so, and besides owned large vineyards of his own. There were more than the eighty butts of which he had spoken, and not only that: they were *botas de asiento*, holding nearly 200 American gallons each, so that the thirty-five or forty butts I required could be drawn off and still not "*castigar la solera.*"* And I was pleased to see that there were two equally large *criaderas* which were used expressly to replenish this *solera*. And the wine of the latter was very fully up to the mark, and would answer my purpose to a T. So when, after much chaffering, we had struck our bargain and had arranged that I should send up the empty butts from Puerto at once and come the next week to receive the wine, and had drawn the average sample which I was to take away with me, I was a happy man and felt almost like embracing old Don Miguel; for though, doubtless, he had done a good business, so had I.

But it was getting on toward afternoon before we were through, and I was becoming as hungry as a hunter, and suggested to him that the horses must be rested by this time, and that the *table d'hôte* at the *fonda* was at 5. Not a bit of it. Why no, Pepe here (the *capataz de bodega*)

*Run the solera lower than prudent before replenishing.

would give us a snack, and then we would start, and see the country on the way home; after which I must certainly come and dine with him. I resisted for a time, well knowing that a Spaniard's first invitation to dinner was only due to politeness; but I was simply overwhelmed by hospitable protestations, and was glad at last to take Pepe's goat-cheese and *rosca* in the comfortable assurance that Don Miguel's oxen and fatlings were killed and awaiting our return to Seville; though it did become a little wearisome as that wily old person whiled away the time with Pepe afterward.

We got off in fair time, however, and it wanted half an hour of sundown when we reached the cross roads, and drove right through the wide open gate into the paved yard of the big store. There we were greeted by the manager and a crowd of dependents, and it was at once apparent that Don Miguel was the boss of the place. I was invited to step into the office while he went into I know not what accounts and arrangements with the manager, and I complied, though with a heavy heart and oh, so light a stomach! and tried hard to amuse myself with a ten days' old Madrid daily till Don Miguel should reappear. This he did in about an hour, when it was almost dark, and I was beginning to feel as a wild beast in the Zoo feels half an hour before the beef bones are shoved through his bars.

Don Miguel was liberal of apologies, and off we started for the mile and a half which remained between his "Last Chance" and his house. But, lo you! when we arrived at the guard-house at the entrance to the city, where the *carabineros* on duty should have examined the carriage to see that no wine or provisions were passing in without paying the city duties, Don Miguel shouted to his coachman that he must stop, that he wanted to speak with the captain. And out he scrambled and almost embraced that official, leaving me again to cool my heels till they had got to an end of their talk and the promptly offered and accepted cigarettes. But I ought to tell you that, coming along from the "Last Chance," as I was leaning back on the extra-wide seat of Don Miguel's

coach, I felt, as soon as this began to move, a gentle swagging against my calves of some soft and heavy article. So, while Don Miguel was confabbing with his friend the captain, with the privates standing respectfully hard by, I thought I would satisfy myself as to what that soft, lumping substance was, and I leant forward and passed my hand back underneath the seat, and by degrees all around the very largest pig-skin of wine I had ever handled in my life, the saving of duty on which would more than pay the whole of Don Miguel's expenses for the day, let alone the fact that he had just made probably the largest sale effected since the previous Lent! I held my peace then, as you may suppose, nor did I venture any remark on so delicate a subject when Don Miguel re-entered the coach, the captain grasping his hand with one of his own while he opened the door for him with the other, and we jolted over the cobblestones and over the bridge for the remainder of the way to the *palacio.* Whether that captain knew of that pig-skin under the seat (and possibly another under that of the coachman) I never learned, but I am inclined on the whole to think that he did not, as also that neither one nor the other suspected that I was *particeps criminis.* Anyway, Don Miguel was in a triumphant good humor for the rest of the way, and, asking a thousand pardons for the delays, showed me into a great bedroom opening out of the dining-room, on the *piso principál* of the dismal old barrack, and presently called out that dinner was ready.

Out I went ravenous, ready to eat my jack-boots. I once met in the old country a man known as Jack Boot Stapleton, because it was said that long ago in India, for a large wager, he had, within a given time and with sauces chosen by himself, eaten his jack-boots. But he looked very yellow when I saw him, and it was currently reported that he had ruined his digestion for life by the feat.

Well, that was a feat, I admit, but I would rather have attempted it than that of swallowing Don Miguel's *bacalao,* which was the only substantial food on the table! Do you know what *bacalao* is? It is codfish, dried and salted I do believe expressly for Spain, for at the best of

times it has the *poquito de gusto* which the Spaniard's soul loveth, but which is not grateful to the rest of the civilized world, and this particular *bacalao* had been (as I was told afterward) brought back for consumption at the big house in Seville from the big "Last Chance" at the cross roads, because it was too rancid for even an *arriero* to tackle!

Don Miguel welcomed me to the board and loaded me up a plate of this *bacalao,* excusing himself for the scanty fare because he was a strict Catholic, and the day a Friday in Lent. I am not quite clear how I got through the next *mauvais quart d'heure. Mauvais* it was, certainly! I don't think I ever in my life felt quite so sick all over. The only other things on the table, besides *roscas,* were pickled *alcaparones,* and with these two things I filled up a little corner of my aching void, and then I am afraid I told some taradiddle, which I feel sure the recording angel will not have registered as a lie direct, and got away from Don Miguel and fairly ran to the hospitable *Fonda de Europa,* and threw myself at that late hour on the mercy of the dear departed Don Antonio Maulini and his estimable *chef,* and by their aid, and that of a bottle of Amontillado I had myself supplied, found myself within an hour in a blissful state of repletion, sitting out in that dear old *patio* smoking the strongest *breba* which Spain would allow its long-suffering Pearl of the Antilles to supply to its own children.

But for all the Duke Humphrey's dinners in creation commend me to that which a Don Miguel will set before you on a Friday in Lent!

And presently there strolled into the *patio,* cool as a cucumber, the redoubtable Tommy, who heard of my day's woes with his usual calm, and only remarked, without removing his cuttie, "Served you jolly well right. If the old wosbird had crammed his *bacalao* down your throat you would have only been fairly paid for leaving me last night to see all those fellows under the counter!" Which in effect he had done.

THE

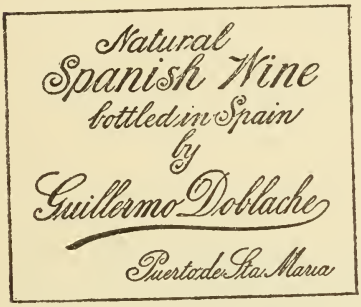
GUILLERMO DOBLACHE

NATURAL SHERRIES.

BOTTLED IN SPAIN,

And Shipped in Cases of One Dozen Bottles Each.

Principal Label on all the Sherries



Vinos Finos in their natural state cannot be drawn, little by little from their cask, without risk of losing much of the peculiar grace and fragrance for which they are remarkable.

Natural sherries, when bottled in the climate of their production, will keep for scores of years, and mature and soften more rapidly than when bottled at port of arrival.

Besides the general label given above, each sherry bears a crescent-shaped (black on gold) neck label, specifying its quality; and the bottles are capsuled, and corks branded, "Guillermo Doblache."

By far the most successful of the Guillermo Doblache Sherries in Boston (where they were introduced some three years ago), is the PICARILLO. This is an eight-year-old *vino fino*, very pale, dry, and delicate, and at the same time smooth, the *beau ideal* of *vin brut*. It is fully up to the mark as a table wine for the connoisseur, and its freedom from sweetness (and consequent acidity) makes it suitable for the invalid who may be ordered wine. It is also excellent for mixing with aerated or plain water, which cannot be said of any of the *liqueur* sherries.

N.B. — The PICARILLO is to be had at all the stores of the New York agents, MESSRS. PARK & TILFORD, and of all wine-merchants in New York and Boston, either by the bottle or the original case of twelve bottles.

The **Guillermo Doblache** *Picarillo*, an eight year old, very pale and dry, natural sherry, referred to within, is to be had at all the stores of the New York agents,

MESSRS. PARK & TILFORD,

and of all winemerchants.

Lil' Ras'h'l.

A Lunch at the Carthusian Convent on the Guadalete.

BY GUILLERMO DOBLACHE.

[*Reprinted from Bonfort's Wine and Spirit Circular, January* 10, 1897.]

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Besides the general label given above, each sherry bears a crescent-shaped (black on gold) neck label, specifying its quality; and the bottles are capsuled, and corks branded, "Guillermo Doblache."

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N.B. — The PICARILLO is to be had at all the stores of the New York agents, MESSRS. PARK & TILFORD, and of all wine-merchants in New York and Boston, either by the bottle or the original case of twelve bottles.

LIL' RAS'H'L.*

BY "GUILLERMO DOBLACHE."

A Lunch at the Carthusian Convent on the Guadalete.

You ask me for another yarn of my beloved Andalucia, the land of sunshine and warmth,

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It must have been two years or so before Tommy Dodd, of whom I told you last year,

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Since the introduction "here in Boston," in 1891, of the Guillermo Doblache Natural Sherries, it has often been asked, with reference to the Picarillo, the most popular of these, "What possessed the man to saddle his favorite wine with such a name?!" Lil' Ras'h'l, which appeared last January in the principal "Trade" Journal of the country, shows how the name came to be affixed to the wine in question, which is an eight year-old "vino fino" of the Albariza district.

turned up in Puerto,* and I was finishing up my work there for a rush home to spend Christmas in the old country. I was keeping bachelor house on a little fig and apricot orchard called "La Manuela," which I had bought because it was within an easy ride of the cellars† of my firm, and yet beyond the range of the smells and other inconveniences of the town. I had had to add to the little flat-roofed-all-on-the-ground-floor house, and while I was at it I had put a fire-place with its separate chimney in every room, much to the amusement of my neighbors, who had renamed it in consequence, "La Casa de las Chimineas."‡ This, however, did not trouble me, for I had become quite clear that after a north wind had been blowing for two or three days together, as was sometimes the case in those parts, you wanted a fire very much indeed; and I observed, too, that these very neighbors looked much more happy and comfortable with their chairs drawn up to an open fire-place with three or four apricot logs burning in it than I had ever seen them when in their own houses seated around a table with their toes thrust under its green baize petticoat, getting all the heat they could from a pan of live charcoal, while their lungs took in more or less of the fumes of the latter.

It was the day before my twenty—th birthday, and I had just come off the flat-bricked roof, after watching the sun set in the Atlantic and the lights of Cadiz across the mouth of the bay begin to twinkle, and had settled myself for the evening in one of two comfortable armchairs which the sitting-room of La Manuela possessed, when I heard a *calesa* turn in out of the sandy lane which ran past the house, from Puerto to Rota, and a moment after high words between the driver and his fare. Now the *calesa* of those days was a very rough yellow gig, with a hood to it, hung on leathers by way of springs, drawn by a frame of a horse, and

* Port St. Mary's, on the mainland at the mouth of the Guadalete and the entrance to the Bay of Cadiz.

† The English-speaking people of Puerto and Jerez insist on calling the large airy barns (Bodegas) in which they store their wines "cellars," thereby giving the false impression (to any one not familiar with them) that they are underground vaults.

‡ The house of the chimneys.

driven by a man who sat on your toes. So it was not a comfortable machine in which even to come along the two miles which lay between the railway station and La Manuela, and when the driver demanded $2 for the trip, it was natural that the fare should protest, which, in effect, the fare was still doing when I went out to see what was the matter.

"Why, Bob Courage, where on earth"——

"There, there; I'll tell you all about myself presently. You know I intended looking you up on my travels. Just settle with this fellow, who appears to want the value of his old rattle-trap for having brought me up from the station in it." And Bob walked off indoors carrying his portmanteau, and leaving me to arrange matters with the *calesero*, which, perhaps, was natural, as neither understood a word of what the other said.

When I had done this, and rejoined Bob in the sitting-room, where he had made himself quite at home in his dear, old, ponderous fashion, he reminded me that he had started out the previous summer, just after having scraped through his final exams. at Cambridge, and taken his B. A. degree, for a round through Europe, and that he had written to tell me of his intention to take in the Peninsula before settling down to help his good old father (a squire in the midland counties) rule his parish and preserve his foxes. Bob had been at Rugby with one of my brothers, and had been called by his form master, "an inert mass of beef and beer." This was by no means true of him, for he was always very moderate, both in eating and drinking, and his slowness was partly due to temperament and partly to the fact that he was growing very fast at the time. He grew to be six feet one in his socks, and broad in proportion, by the time he had to go to Cambridge. He went, like his father before him, to a small but very plucky and aquatic college there, and contributed largely, as rowing the strong oar in the boat, to its being head of the river, in his second year, and keeping that place for the rest of his time. He would have been in the "'Varsity" boat, so they said, but for the emphasis of expression allowed himself by the

captain of that day, and Bob's rooted objection to profanity. Endless were the stories told by the Cambridge boys, after he left, illustrative of his strength and easy good nature, and at the same time of the simple, quiet putting down of his foot, which always came, and was always respected by them, when any but the simplest swear words were used, or there was any approach to loose talk. If you repeat these stories to him now, good old squire that he is in his turn, he will tell you that they are all part of an unaccountable myth, but I know of a surety that they have sufficient foundation in fact. And, anyway, it was good to see him stretching his lubber length in one of the easy chairs, with his heels looking as much at home on the rush matting as if they had been there all the autumn.

It turned out that his plans just fitted in with mine, and that I might have spared myself the disgust which had come over me when I had thought that here was the old boy come no doubt to spend Christmas with me and that I had to be off for England at the end of the week. For he had come from Lisbon last, and was only going to stay long enough in Puerto to see the cellars, and then go from Cadiz to Seville by steamer (the railway was not yet open), and so on to Granada and Malaga, and through the Mediterranean and up the Nile, and home in time for the Oxford and Cambridge race the following spring. *Medio Andaluz** as I already was in those days, this plan seemed to me crazy in its hurry, but I found that it had all been deliberately planned, and was being as deliberately carried out, and that even if I had had the mind it would have been as useless to try to interfere with it as to try to interfere with the Guadalete flowing into the Bay of Cadiz.

So there was nothing for it but to make the most of the next day, which was the only whole one we should have together, and keep my birthday at the same time; and what better festivity could be found with this in view than a nine miles' row up the Guadalete to the old Carthusian convent on its banks—especially when a "Wet Bob" had to be entertained?

So by the time we had had our coffee and got

*Half Andalucian.

well into our first *puro* * it was settled that this should be the plan, and that Duro should go down presently to the town and order breakfast at 9 sharp at Tomasin's hotel and otherwise arrange for our trip.

I ought to tell you that Duro was a Gallego,† and was my factotum at La Manuela, and that his great ambition in life, an ambition which he afterward achieved, was to root up the seventeen acres or so of apricot and other fruit trees and plant vines in their stead, as had already been done with three acres when the place came into my hands. Meanwhile he had to deliver the figs, apricots, etc., in the market and receive for them on my account about fifteen cents per basket of twenty-five pounds, which, I need scarcely say, did not pay for the gathering and toting. I don't know whether he had any other name than Duro, but he went twice with me to England, and when I crossed to this side of the Atlantic, he did the same, only that he went to Buenos Ayres, where I trust that he is flourishing at this present. Besides looking after the trees and vines he could make a very decent cup of coffee, nor was his ordinary stew of the country at all to be despised, though, when I was at La Manuela as a bachelor, I generally preferred dining at Tomasin's, in the town.

So we two, while Duro was away, smoked our *puros,* and talked over old times, and walked up through the vineyard and *arboleda* along the narrow little sandy cart track, with its geranium hedge on either side, and sat down under the big pine tree, which was Duro's abomination, because it ate half an acre of vineyard, but was too good a tree to admit of my allowing it to be cut down for that or any other reason.

There was a glorious moon, and even Bob, though he would show no enthusiasm, had to admit that he had seen no finer view than that of Cadiz standing out of the sea at the end of its rocky neck, as seen from La Manuela across the

*If you hear a Spaniard say "cigarro," you may know that he means what we call a "cigarette;" when he speaks of a "puro," he means the real thing—and generally pretty strong at that!

†A native of Galicia in the north of Spain. The Gallegos spread themselves over Spain in every direction, hewing the wood and drawing the water, and are rather despised by the Andalucians, etc., because they seldom show brains enough to lift them out of those occupations.

pine wood and sand dunes and the mouth of the classic Bay.

And so we turned in as soon as Duro returned from his errands, and the next morning were on our way, riding down to the cellars, soon after daybreak. After you quit the pine wood on the way down to Port St. Mary's, you ride down over an uninteresting bit of common waste land with nothing on it in the way of green except an occasional scrubby prickly pear or weeping-broom bush, and disfigured very often by the carcases of animals which the owners have been too lazy to bury, and which consequently the half-wild dogs and the energetic beetle of the country have to dispose of. But on the left you have the pretty little house, with its well-watered garden fenced in by a prickly-pear hedge, in which Washington Irving lived for two years or so while he was writing his books on Spain; and, on the right, the famous little ring, where, every year, on midsummer day (besides minor fights at other times) *the* great bull fight of the year takes place, and the good folk of Puerto are apt to lose their heads, when a very good bull has despatched a dozen or so of horses, and to shout "Bravo Toro!" till they are hoarse, and tear up the benches and snatch the water jars from the water carriers, and bundle them all over the barrier into the ring—by way of relieving their feelings.

But there are no bull fights in December, and Bob did not care to worship at the Washington Irving shrine, so we were soon at the cellars, and put our horses in the little stable at the corner of the cooperage. One of the barns, that used for the *soleras*, was just across the way from the railway station of the line to Cadiz, the first one built in Spain. The other, for shipping and bottling, fronted on the orange grove of the principal public garden of Port St. Mary's, and, if I remember rightly, there were blossoms out then, as well as both green and yellow fruit on the trees, and Bob took in their fragance with a solid insular snuff.

But we had to go to business, for I had only allowed two hours of the day in which to show him the cellars. And, as in all well-regulated cellars, the first thing to do was to "take the

morning" (draught), which I proceeded to dip, half and half, from a row of butts of Pedro Jimenez on one side and Color wine on the other. The "morning" is the only one of the eight or so draughts of wine allowed the men throughout the day, which consists of liqueur wine, the rest being drawn from a little cask of such a young white wine of the country as would be a *fino* at two years old, but, if kept to the age at which a true *vino fino* would fairly begin to develop its aroma, would become "as coarse as be d——d." So I tried Bob with my mixture and assured him that according to the best authorities it was an excellent morning stomachic. But he would none of it, and reminded me that he "never mixed," but confined himself to the driest India pale ale, or, as he called it, "bittah beah;" and he insisted on trying for his "morning" a very pale eight-year-old *vino fino*, a parcel of which was then being bottled for London. It had somewhat the same color as his favorite "bittah beah," and he evidently took it to be of about the same strength (though, as a matter of fact, it would be, natural though it was, about three times as strong), in which belief no doubt he was confirmed, when I, seeing that it suited him, had a *jarra** of it drawn off into a picnic keg and sent down to the boat, which was waiting for us opposite Tomasin's hotel. It happened to be my own particular table wine, so it suited me also, and I knew that Santiago Freeland, who was to join us at Tomasin's, also affected it. Poor old Santiago! He fell in Cuba in the rising of '72, but in the fifties he was as lazy, light-hearted, devil-may-care, devout and yet skeptical a laddie as ever came of Yankee father and Cuban mother; and withal the best dancer and amateur bull fighter in Puerto or Jerez. He never would take the trouble to train properly, and so, in the boat races on the Bay, which we used to have with the Cadiz boys, he would pull like a madman to the finish, and then drop into a kind of fit on the bottom of the boat for the rest of the afternoon.

So when I had shown Bob through the cellars, and he had just put his lips to sundry

*A wooden vessel used for racking, and holding something under three American gallons.

olorosos, and finos, and amontillados, and had duly admired the "dressing" (with wooden hoops) of the butts and hogsheads which were being prepared in the cooperage for receiving clear wine for shipment, and had, as he put it, "done the bodega," we strolled through the orange grove and down the long street, which runs nearly the length of Port St. Mary's and divides the river quarter on the banks of the Guadalete from the "high" quarter running up the hill to the west. But though we were a quarter of an hour late at Tomasin's, and I had in my note begged Santiago to be punctual, we had to amuse ourselves the best we could for another quarter, till His Coolness turned up, with his sixth cigarette in his mouth, remarking simply, when I told him that we were famished, that we had the whole day before us. Meanwhile Bob and I had seen, from the quay directly opposite Tomasin's, the departure, after much bustle and bell ringing, of the little steamer which still found plenty of passengers for its seven-mile run to Cadiz, across the mouth of the bay, among those who preferred the risk of seasickness to the certainty of jolting and the probability of dust on the twenty-mile railroad journey around it. Likewise I had submitted to his criticism the *randan*,* which I had selected as the best boat for our particular crew and purpose, and had had it, as expected, "damned with faint praise" by an oar fresh from the 'Varsity.

Bob and Santiago, contrasts as they were, soon became good friends, and we lost no time pitching into the omelettes and fresh fish from the bay and other good things supplied by the great Tomasin, who himself came in from time to time with great urbanity, to see that we were well served, and told us (we meekly acquiescing) what would be good for us for dinner when we should return, sharp set, at 5.30. So, then, after a heavenly half hour in the balcony overlooking the river, each smoking a breba, for the smuggling of which Juan, the head waiter, was famous, and lazily looking across the pine woods and sand dunes on the opposite side to-

* An English boat, built for three pullers, a stroke and bow oar (bow steering) with a pair of sculls in the middle.

ward Medina Sidonia on its hillside, and the Ronda mountains in the far distance, we betook ourselves to the boat with a basket of sandwiches to be washed down by the *vino fino* which was already there in its keg in the cool of the stern.

It was a splendid day. The norther, which had been blowing for some time, had gone down the day before and left clear, still weather, of which the Indian summer on this side the Atlantic sometimes reminds me. I put Santiago to stroke, Bob at the sculls, and took the bow myself and away we went, much to the edification of the small boys of Puerto, a large proportion of whom seemed in those days never to be at school. Under the pretty suspension bridge of the old post road leading to Puerto Real and Cadiz, and the ugly girder bridge of the railroad, and soon we were at the beginning of the long reach, and took a breath before spurting up it. Here it was that Bob addressed the keg of *fino* as the "little quart bottle of beah," and treated it as presumably harmless; and Santiago discoursed us gravely about the battle of the Guadalete, fought on the wide flat plain through which we were passing, between the Moors and Spaniards, which settled matters between them, so far as Andalucia was concerned, and left the former for many hundred years masters of that splendid country and a large slice of the rest of the Peninsula. He was enthusiastic about the forefathers, but by no means about the modern Spaniards, who, as he said, did nothing for Cuba, "the Pearl of the Antilles," as he lovingly called her, but sent out greedy officials to misgovern and rob her. And then he told how, after the battle, the little black image of the Virgin Mary, which was already the pride of Puerto, was piously buried by two monks, who hoped to dig it up again and reinstate it when better times should come; and how they died and the secret of the hiding place died with them; and then how, in the glorious times of Ferdinand and Isabella, when Andalucia had been recovered by the Spaniards and the Moors driven over to Africa with the keys of their Peninsula houses (which they were never to un-

lock again) in their pockets, two pious maidens were led by a vision of the Virgin to the very place, and the little black image was dug up unharmed and put in the place of honor of the principal parish church in Puerto, where it rests to this day with scores of little models of parts of the human body underneath it to commemorate some of the wonderful cures which it has effected.

Then up the long reach and past the *Barca florinda*, the quay from which Jerez used to ship its wines on *faluchas* down to the ships in the bay before the days of the railroad, and soon, after one or two more breaths and appropriate ceremonies, we were at the little landing place just underneath the bluff on which stands the famous convent of the Carthusian monks, which had been, with other convents, emptied and dismantled and its lands confiscated under Espartero's ministry, and was now at that stage halfway between glory and ruin, which was sad enough to see.

But we were thinking at the moment only of lunch, for which the nine miles row up the river would have prepared us, even without the help of the natural *fino* sherry which is, bar *Manzanilla*, the most effective appetizer of my acquaintance. And fortunately on the way up we had been able to add to our provender by a mean trick we had played on the gray mullet which swarm in the Guadalete. These innocent little fish had not yet got over the scare which the fast Thames-built boats had caused them, and it was only necessary, when the boat was in full swing up the long reach and a shoal of them appeared ahead, to edge them in toward the bank till the blade of the bow oar almost touched it, when a good lot of them would determine, being great at jumping, to throw themselves over the boat and escape, a fair proportion of them always missing their leap and falling into it. On this occasion we had about a dozen when we arrived at the landing-place. Bob had wanted to throw them in again as they fell in the bottom of the boat, but Santiago and I knew better; and when we had built a fire of driftwood and cut toasting-forks, and presented the great Robert

with the first fish cooked, he acknowledged that he would have made the greatest mistake of his life had he given them their liberty. Reader, if you ever go to Port St. Mary's mind you row up to the convent and try a "ramrod frizzle" of gray mullet, and wash it down with an eight-year-old *vino fino*—but don't make the mistake of treating the latter as if it were of the strength of "bittah beah."

For this is what poor dear old Bob did, quite inadvertently, and came nearer to being the worse for liquor than ever in his lifetime, before or since. Not that any stranger to him would have noticed it, and it was only his preternatural gravity, as he stalked up the path after lunch to the big gate of the convent, which led me to do so. We were admitted through a small wicket, into the first great courtyard of the convent, by the only one remaining of its former occupants, a little old wizened lay brother, with a bunch of huge keys in his hand. And we spent a pleasant, though perhaps a shade mournful, half hour, in going through the great church, quite dismantled and beginning to leak, and the refectory, where the twenty-eight members of the fraternity used to dine, preached to meanwhile by one of their number from a little stone pulpit standing out from the wall about eight feet above the ground. For, you see, the poor old fellows were allowed no conversation whatever except what I will presently tell you. They had each a snug enough little cell of two rooms, arranged around a cloister, which in its turn enclosed a yard with pomegranate and orange and almond and other trees, and whenever, in their walks in this cloister or elsewhere, one of them met another, he stopped for a moment and said, gravely enough we may suppose, "We all have to die," and his brother replied, "I know it;" and they passed on without another word. So they must have been glad of a sermon at meals, even if it was a bad one. Not that the old boys could have had very bad times, for they were mostly old retired army officers who had had plenty of knocks and whom, it may be supposed, the world had not treated very well, and they came here, with such little property as they could

bring to the general fund, for quiet and repose. And then there must have been plenty for some of them to do in the management of their property, which, from the small accretions of centuries, had become very large—though how they managed this without talking is more than I have ever been able to make out.

After we had had our round, we went for our siesta to the quarters of the abbot or *Padre Prior*, which had a little tower to distinguish it from its fellows, with a flat roof with a stone bench around three sides of it and a parapet toward the river, whence one had a splendid view over the delta of the Guadalete, of Cadiz rising from the sea in the distance, with just a gleam of the bay between the two. Bob at once stretched himself out on the inner brick ledge, while I sat on one of the others and watched Santiago, who, leaning against the parapet and inhaling the smoke of his cigarette after the manner of Cubans, was drawing out the little harmless lay brother about the former glories of the brotherhood. The little man had done with the flocks and the herds and the brood mares of the finest Arab blood, and was waxing enthusiastic over the fact that you might have ridden straight on end through their possessions for a whole day, and not got to the end of them, when Bob raised himself on one elbow with a start, and, pointing at him in a shocked, and almost horrified, manner, said solemnly, "Now if that man swears again he must go!" Santiago and I burst out laughing, not only at this unjustified verbal assault on the little lay brother, but also at the latter's puzzled and deprecating face.

This brought Bob upsitting and in his senses. Looking still gravely, at me, he said: "Guillermo, tha' wine o' yours dec'ving. It's a lil' rash'l. Wha's a lil' rash'l in Spanish, eh?" Perceiving he must mean "little rascal," I replied, "*Picarillo*," and a happy smile came over his face, as he found that he could manage the liquid Spanish better than he could consonantic English, and he murmured, "Picarillo, tha's wha' tis, picarillo," and subsided on the brick bench of the *Padre Prior* to finish his siesta.

But when, at the end of half an hour, we

roused him up, his speech was as clear as a bell, and my word, how he *did* put his back into those sculls on the way back to Puerto! The old *randan* never went like it before or since. And this in spite of the fact that I did little more than steer with my oar, and Santiago didn't pull his own weight with his; for we had agreed together, during that half hour, that it would be good for the great Robert to work off that "bittah beah!"

And then, what a dinner Tomasin had got for us on our return! He was an Italian who had begun life as a major-domo and general factotum to an eccentric Irish sherry shipper, who had finally given up housekeeping in Puerto (his Spanish wife preferring to live in Cadiz), and had put Tomasin in his hotel as landlord and boarded there for the rest of his days. And then the ground landlord had sold the house to Tomasin for an annuity and his board, and had departed this life after drawing the annuity for one year, because what he got at this *table d'hôte* was so much better than what he had ever eaten before, that he overate himself, and no Puerto doctor could be found who had ever treated that complaint.

So Tomasin was well-lined and complacent, and came and smoked a *breba* with us and praised his own amontillado, after dinner. But Bob was very shy of that, or of anything else the least alcoholic, for the rest of the time he spent on the Bay of Cadiz.

I told him that he had inadvertently given me a fighting name for my favorite wine; but I saw that he did not take it as a joke: and in effect, if, to this day, you want Robert Courage to "throw things" at you, just whisper in his ear, "Picarillo!"

Guillermo Doblache's *"PICARILLO"* Sherry (eight year old *vino fino* bottled in Spain) and his *Manzanilla Pasada* are to be had in Boston of the following firms :—

Alameda Co.
Henry Atkins & Co.
W. Bixby & Co.
Blanchard & Farrar.
N. Y. Brintnall & Co.
Carter, Carter & Kilham,
S. Q. Cochran & Co.
Codman & Hall Co.
Cutter Bros. & Co.
J. S. Doane & Co.
M. Doherty & Co.
W. E. Frost & Co.
J. B. Fuller & Co.
Lee Hammond.
P. Hanson & Co.
Geo. F. Hewett & Co.
Holden & Clay.
W. A. Holmes & Co.
C. S. Johnson.
John Lyons.
W., J. & D. Lyons.
F. J. McCarthy & Co.
John R. Magullion & Co.
W. C. Mayo.
S. S. Pierce Co.
C. L. Richardson & Co.
John Shea & Co.
Tighe & Burke.
G. W. Torrey & Co.
Otis E. Weld & Co.
Wood, Pollard & Co.

And of all retail dealers.